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THE HON. PAUL BALBAN MP

MINISTER FOR TRAFFIC, TRANSPORT AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

BUDGET ADDRESS 2015 - 22 JUNE 2015

Mr Speaker, it is an honour to stand here today to deliver my 4th Budget address. The last before a General Election, when the people of Gibraltar will be able to take account and analyse exactly how, in their minds we have fared, as a Government. It is my honest opinion, Mr Speaker that we have done well. It is impossible to please everyone, but I sincerely think that we have managed, via our thorough manifesto promises, to steer Gibraltar well into the future. Our successes across the board have been noteworthy indeed, two new schools, a University for Gibraltar, almost 1000 new affordable homes already close to completion and a new 1,700 recently announced, the refurbishment of the once forgotten housing estates, public meetings of the DPC, a new small boats marina, a draft traffic plan, a new psychiatric unit, Commonwealth Park, achieving the lowest levels of unemployment ever seen locally, a new bank for Gibraltar, the Gibraltar Mega Music Festival, a new ID Card, the list goes on and on, Mr Speaker.

I am very proud of being part of this team, working together for what **we** believe is for the good of Gibraltar. Clearly, not all will agree with us, not least the honorable members sitting across the floor. Mr Speaker, clearly they would have done things differently, of course they would have, but they had their chance for almost 16 years in Government. **Now it's our turn.**

Mr Speaker, I sincerely think that most will agree and I am very confident that this will become evident when the time comes for the electorate to choose the way forward, that we have done very well indeed.



TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Mr Speaker, I will now turn my attention to my Ministerial Responsibilities and start with Technical Services, a department that often goes by without sufficient mention, as they quietly are responsible for providing all the technical advice and know-how to the vast majority of Government Projects. I wish to put on record, that I am most grateful for the assistance provided by such a professional and hard-working department. I still recall my first briefing meeting when the one thing that rung out most clearly was that the department felt that they were not being put to their full use. Too much outsourcing was being done then and the department felt that they could do so much more. Today, TSD is at the heart of most Government projects.

During the past Financial Year, the Department has been involved in a number of projects covering a large variety of areas such as coastal protection works and rock fall protection as well as works in relation to their defined responsibilities such as highway maintenance and works to the main sewer amongst others.

Coastal Works

On the coastal works side, Technical Services has been directly responsible for the delivery of two major projects. The Sandy Bay Beach protection and regeneration project was completed in time for last year's bathing season and has seen a major transformation with the creation of a wide stable beach, something that has not been the case for a number of years now. This project was one of our manifesto commitments.

The Department has also led on the North Mole Reclamation project, which is currently underway. This project will see the existing Western Arm extended northwards by just under 120m. In all, nine concrete caissons have been sunk to create the perimeter of the new reclamation. Approximately 80,000 tonnes of rubble from the Eastside will be processed as fill material and a new landmass of approximately 10,000m² will be created. These works are earmarked for completion in July this year.

For the incoming year, Technical Services will continue to develop various other coastal works projects including regular maintenance of the existing coastal defences.

Cliff Stabilisation:

Turning now to cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection projects. Following a tender award, the Department carried out slope stabilisation works above Windmill Hill Road in an area, which had suffered from a major landslide. In addition, assessments and designs for further rock fall protection measures at the Eastside slopes and Green Lane were commenced and are currently on-going as part of the Government's cliff stabilisation and rock fall protection programme which will continue during this Financial Year.

Technical Services Department have also been fully involved with the need to relocate the Motorcycle Club from Brian Navarro Way to a new site within the Governor's Cottage Industrial Park. The original motorcycle club suffered extensive structural damage



following a major rock fall in November 2012. Given the rock fall hazard that exists in this area a new site for the motorcycle club was identified within the Governor's Cottage Camp Industrial Park. The department acted as project managers at all stages of the design, including the procurement and construction of the club and I am pleased to announce that this was completed in November 2014.

Highways Maintenance:

Mr Speaker, with regards to highway maintenance, the works programme has once again been successful over the past year with on-going repairs to roads, footpaths and retaining walls. Resurfacing works have been carried out during the past year to a stretch of Europa Road to the south of the "1772 Club" where a new footpath has also been constructed to improve pedestrian safety in the area. Additionally, resurfacing works has also seen the extension of the Catalan Bay car park to provide better parking facilities for beach users and the resurfacing of a new temporary coach park on the site of the old air terminal.

The replacement of pelican crossing lights and equipment has been undertaken in a number of locations working jointly with the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. This year saw the introduction of **countdown timers** at the Line Wall Road crossing. This was as a direct result of the recommendations of the Sustainable Transport, Traffic & Parking Plan – the STTPP for short.

Yes, Mr Speaker, the Plan which has received much attention of late, often mocked at by the Honourable members opposite, a plan that they themselves would have been proud of, a plan that they would not discard through their own admission and that is clearly a very good thing, a plan that the members opposite would wish we rushed for who can imagine what reason. Well it is this Government's General Policy as part of this Plan that we encourage people to adopt alternative and more sustainable modes of transport, the most basic of which is walking itself. In order to do this, it is this Government's view that we must provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to make walking safer, more comfortable and hence acceptable to the population at large. These countdown timers will help to do exactly that. They inform the pedestrian of the time that they have left to cross and therefore give them confidence, feeling less rushed when crossing the road. Pedestrians can therefore now take an informed decision as to whether they will have enough time to cross and there is no confusion between cars and pedestrians as to who has right of way. The programme to improve our existing pedestrian crossings will continue during the coming year with the installation of further countdown timers at some of our busiest pedestrian routes. Importantly, there will also be important new pedestrian improvements at the Trafalgar Interchange, by way of a new puffin crossing at Ragged Staff, something very much needed and was very obvious, and **that** come across loud and clear as part of the public consultation process of the STTPP. This new crossing at Ragged Staff is earmarked for completion shortly.

Mr Speaker, as in previous years, the Department continues to successfully manage road closures and diversions on the Public Highway, both for its own in-house works and for all



other utility companies and contractors, in a manner that balances the need to undertake works against allowing vehicles to circulate. The increased construction activity generated by new projects makes this task increasingly difficult. In order to reduce the impact of road closures works are only carried out avoiding peak times wherever possible, and after-hours and weekend work, as always, is the default condition imposed on contractors in order to minimise inconvenience to the public.

As stated in my last Budget speech Mr Speaker, a comprehensive major resurfacing programme was commenced by the Department last year in an effort to tackle the under-investment in road maintenance in past years. Major resurfacing works were undertaken along Rosia Road and also along Line Wall Road. Over the coming year the major road resurfacing programme will continue with the resurfacing of the southern section of Queensway from Ragged Staff Roundabout until the Mid-Harbours roundabout. Additionally, the roundabout at Europort Avenue, adjacent to the fuel station (Morrison's roundabout) has been completely resurfaced. These works were undertaken at off peak times and weekends, thus avoiding the traffic disruption that would inevitably ensue should these works be carried out during normal working hours.

Main Street Paving:

Mr Speaker, as many will have by now noticed, walking along certain stretches of Main Street has become safer for ladies wearing high-heeled shoes. We are pleased to announce that works to repair the joints in the paving on Main Street has now commenced. The works entail the lifting and relaying of the stone blocks along Main Street and the filling and stabilising of all joints using a special polymer resin. Presently a stretch of Main Street from its junction with Engineer Lane to its junction with Cooperage Lane has been completed. These works will be extended to other areas during the course of the year. These works were another one of our manifesto commitments for which the appropriation of funds was sought last year this and should see a vast improvement to what was an area of concern to many.

Dudley Ward Tunnel:

Mr Speaker, works to install a new fire-fighting main and emergency telephone lines along the full length of Dudley Ward Way Tunnel in line with our manifesto commitment have also been recently completed. During the coming year mobile phone coverage and ventilation requirements will be designed with a view to improving the current situation as much as possible, working within the constraints imposed by this ex-military tunnel. The measures in place now make the tunnel a far safer place making it possible for the essential services to attend to any accident within the tunnel expeditiously.

Sustainable Transport, Traffic & Parking Plan (STTPP):

Mr Speaker, although I have already mentioned the Sustainable Transport, Traffic and Parking Plan earlier, I will now turn to this mayor Government project and indeed Manifesto Commitment. The STTPP has been a truly inter-ministerial and inter-



departmental project which has seen involvement of Technical Services, including Highways and our Traffic team, the Ministry for the Environment, the Bus Company and our consultants Mott MacDonald, who are market leaders in Traffic and Transport Plans across the world for many years. Mr Speaker, Although my shadow, has complained about the time that this project has taken, he must understand that for a project of this magnitude, one that cuts across the whole community and affects all of us whether we choose to drive or not, walk or take the bus or not. This plan is not something that should or indeed can be rushed in any way, shape or form. One cannot spend taxpayer's money on ideas dreamt about on one lazy Sunday afternoon having then to back track when it fails through a lack of proper research. Mr Speaker, this plan is a comprehensive document, which will form the blueprint for traffic and transport for at least the next 10 years. Already the plan has churned some very well thought out ideas, which are within the very comprehensive draft document already published. Mr Speaker, I am very proud to have delivered a major manifesto commitment in the form of this draft Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan for Gibraltar. As part of this plan and with the use of digital modelling, we now have the means to be able to put certain potential scenarios to the test. We can now compare before and after scenarios to compare what real effect a change has had on traffic flow. This draft document was open to public consultation until the end of March of this year and our consultants are presently compiling a database of all responses received. This database will set out the issues and suggestions raised by members of the public and how these will be considered and addressed as part of the work to complete the final version of the Plan, which is earmarked for completion before the end of this year.

Mr Speaker, as part of the work carried out so far a number of pilot schemes have already been introduced including a new drop-off zone outside St Joseph's Middle and Primary Schools as well as the introduction of a temporary roundabout at the junction of Glacis Road and Bayside Road. The changes at St. Joseph' School have brought about mixed comments ranging from the very positive from parents picking up and dropping their children off with much greater ease, to the negative of residents who are unhappy about the loss of permanent parking in their area. Parking still exists all day except for 3 hours each day and parking is restored at all times during weekends, public and school holidays. Change, especially when it comes to parking, is something that is difficult to come to terms with and any Traffic Plan will be faced with these issues at every step of the way. We are currently working very hard with the tenants of the South District to try to find solutions to these in conjunction with other historical issues, which have surfaced as a result of these new changes. We are clear that for any plan to work, we have to be brave to enforce change that will hopefully bring about the long-lasting positive changes that will benefit Gibraltar as a whole including the environment.

Mr Speaker, Gibraltar has one of the largest vehicle ownership rates in the world. The easiest thing politically would be to do nothing until one is forced to do something in the future. It takes a forward thinking Government to try to bring about positive change in this respect. To be able to see the **whole** benefit of the plan one needs to wait until all of the parts of the puzzle are in place. This will come about once the final document is read and discussed in order to prepare a plan of action based on the recommendations received. Until then the picture will be incomplete.



Mr Speaker, on traffic matters the Department has continued to make good progress this year and has seen a number of other improvements and initiatives. Speed Indicator Devices have been installed on several of our main arterial roads. These Speed Indicator Devices are vehicle-activated signs, which detect and display real time vehicle speeds as vehicles approach them, in order to advise drivers of the speed they are travelling at. The aim of these devices is to provide information, which will allow drivers to change their behaviour towards speed and are one of several measures that form part of a wider speed management plan. In this respect the department is also carrying out a full review of the speed limits on all of Gibraltar's roads and has commenced a programme for the installation of speed cameras on some of the roads with statistically the highest accident rates in Gibraltar in an effort to make our roads safer for all our users. The Ministry for Traffic has been working closely with the Royal Gibraltar Police to ensure that the speed cameras are placed in the most strategic of locations throughout Gibraltar, especially in accident hotspots. There have been other road calming measures also set up using speed ramps within densely populated areas e.g. Prince Edward's Road, Lower Castle Road, St. Joseph's Estate and at the entrance of Camp Bay.

Mr Speaker, Other initiatives have included the installation of a new pelican crossing at Queensway by the area of Kings Bastion and the upgrading of the zebra crossing on Glacis Road to a pelican crossing. Apart from the new pelican crossing at Ragged Staff the department is currently carrying out a review of crossings at the Trafalgar Interchange with a view of making changes to improve circulation routes for pedestrians in this busy junction, which has historically neglected the needs of those travelling on foot.

More initiatives will continue until the final plan is printed and beyond. Mr Speaker, this plan is not short term but a plan for the foreseeable future.

Bus Turn Around Area:

Mr Speaker, In relation to assisting the Bus Company with improving their service to the public, Technical Services identified a means to allow buses to turn around within the area of Brian Navarro Way. This area is relatively narrow and in the past prevented buses from safely turning around without the need to manoeuvre and cause an obstruction and danger to other road users. A purpose built lay-by was constructed within an area of waste ground bordering the main road to allow the safe turning circle of buses. This has meant that there is no longer the need of having an extra minibus to service this route and hence a saving may be made to the public purse. These works were completed at the start of the year at a cost of £57,848.83.

Sewers Section:

Mr Speaker, moving onto the sewers section, during the past year flood prevention measures along the southern end of Fish Market Road and at Wellington Front were completed, meaning that the historical problems of flooding in both of these areas during periods of concentrated heavy rainfall will now be a thing of the past.



Mr Speaker, the condition and upkeep of Gibraltar's main sewer and storm water drainage networks continues to be a matter of great concern for the Government arising from a lack of sufficient investment and neglect to what is arguably the most important and essential part of our local infrastructure. To this end, works were carried out to desilt large sections of our drains at a number of locations. These have included the main sewer along Rosia Road, the Main Street sewer from Bell Lane to King's Street and the main storm water culverts from Reclamation Road to Bishop Caruana Road. Further desilting works will progressively be extended to other areas.

Other works carried out have included the relining of the Main Sewer along Line Wall Road from the junction of King's Street up to Bomb House Lane, the relaying of a collapsed storm drain along Europort Avenue and the laying of new storm water culverts at Marina Bay.

Funding is once again being provided this Financial Year for the purchase of equipment to allow the sewer infrastructure sections to continue to provide an efficient service in respect of its inspection of the sewer network.

Garage & Workshop:

Mr Speaker, this is also the case for the Garage & Workshop where funding for new equipment is also being provided. They will continue to provide a service to maintain the fleet of Government vehicles, including the refuse collection vehicles. The situation with the Garage & Workshop is also under review given the previous administration's hurried signing of a Collective Agreement a few weeks before the Election last, which placed them in a Government owned Company as an interim measure that would allow them to receive a 12% pay increase.

Conclusion:

Mr Speaker, the Technical Services Department is one of those Government departments who are rarely in the limelight but they work tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver on their defined responsibilities maintaining public infrastructure and to support and provide technical advice to other Government Ministries and Departments. As can be seen, they will continue to do this coming year in all manner of projects in order to deliver on the Government's extensive and comprehensive programmes

Public Transport

Mr Speaker, late last year, an amalgamation of the Ministries of Traffic & Public Transport took place following a reshuffle of Ministerial responsibilities. The Ministry is now responsible for the Gibraltar Bus Company together with the local Taxi Service. Within public transport there are many challenges that one is faced with in an attempt to improve the provision of such an important service to the community. Furthermore, in order to be



truly successful in the policies surrounding the STTPP, an efficient public transport service is essential.

The Government by way of the Ministry is continually looking for ways to improve the Taxi service within Gibraltar. Clearly there are a multitude of issues that can affect the taxi service as indeed the bus service, the greatest of which are the traffic problems associated and surrounding the Frontier and also the airfield barrier crossings. These, on a Sunday during the summer schedule, close to allow, no less than 9 scheduled flights to land and takeoff. This added to any potential private or military aircraft and runway-cleaning operations inevitably lead to great delays and an unavoidable deterioration in service. With the barrier down at least 20 times on a Sunday, clearly we have a problem. No doubt, a victim of our own success in attracting more flights to Gibraltar, something which we can only be totally proud of, but unfortunately this will affect other operations in such a small place like ours. It is at the airport arrivals terminal that we see the effect of this traffic build-up together with the Frontier taxi rank itself. Hence, it is inevitable that this has a bearing on the taxi and bus service.

Mr Speaker, Government by way of the recruitment of five transport inspectors and the installation of the taxi GPS tracking system has managed to improve the Taxi service in some areas, but we continue to work hand in hand with the GTA in order to jointly identify strategies to continue to better the Taxi service throughout Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, The new MAN buses have provided Gibraltar with a much-needed improvement to its aging fleet. The previous bus fleet was in fact not so much aged, as in fact simply showing the strains of being driven in an environment such as ours where we are faced with very steep hills, high temperatures and narrow, winding roads. They have clearly not provided the taxpayer with the years that were promised when they were first purchased. The old blue buses were fitted with American supplied gearboxes which when the service provider in UK stopped supplying spares for, spares became almost impossible to acquire. Therefore a minor fault in a gearbox meant having to adapt a completely new gearbox from another manufacturer. Once this occurred the buses' performance was critically diminished leading to their steep decline. The new buses are fitted with powerful 6 cylinder engines, which will amply provide them with sufficient torque to remove all historical issues associated with the previous buses, already mentioned. Users can enjoy travelling in air-conditioned comfort. These new buses are fully compliant with all the legal provisions applicable to all Public Service Vehicles. Hence Gibraltar can now be proud of having a state of the art, ecofriendly and modern bus service, which will ensure an efficient, scheduled service for passengers for years to come.

Furthermore Mr Speaker, Government is also looking into purchasing several extra minibuses to service the Upper Town area. Several models have been identified and negotiations with the relevant vehicle dealers are underway. These will also provide an accessible service to all of its users. The present buses are also insufficiently capable of negotiating all of the roads within the Upper Town area and especially at the junction between Gardiner's Road and Europa Road; the present buses' lack of clearance due to its



very protruding overhang is causing much damage to the underside of the bus leading to a great ongoing maintenance cost.

MOT:

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the Driver & Vehicle Licencing Department. This Department is working closely with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) for the introduction of the tachograph cards for our drivers. At an administrative level, a memorandum of understanding has already been drafted and the DVLD is awaiting DVSA's comments. The department is working forcefully to try and find a workable solution for our few local HGV drivers.

Mr Speaker, the European Commission has adopted rules for linking national electronic registers of road transport undertakings. This linked-up database is called the "European Registers of Road Transport Undertakings" (ERRU). ERRU allows a better exchange of information between Member States, so that the competent authorities can better monitor the compliance of road transport undertakings with the rules in force. Undertakings that do not respect the rules when operating abroad will face the consequences in the Member State where they are based. This creates fairer competition conditions in the road transport market. The set-up of the national registers and their interconnection are required under the legislation on the access to the profession of road transport undertakings. It is in line with this Government's commitment that we introduce and comply with all EU legislation, Mr Speaker, I can safely say that all the necessary procedures to link up to this database are now in place and are up and running.

Mr Speaker, as part of Governments initiative to provide personalised support and to assist applicants and Transport Undertakings wishing to complete the new driver - certificate of professional competence (CPC) initial qualification and periodic training, training is being provided by the DVLD and will be on-going. In the past year, twenty-one (21) drivers have successfully passed the "Bus Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)" and eighteen (18) drivers have successfully passed the "Lorry CPC" initial qualification. Moreover, the Government, in an effort to ensure that all Directive requirements are met will continue to deliver the 35-hour periodic training for existing drivers during 2015/2016. Presently, 151 Bus and 71 Lorry drivers have successfully attended the CPC periodic training. With this initiative both Transport Undertakings or individual applicants who take advantage of the possibility of completing the 35 hours of periodic training over the five year period will be able to spread the training costs over the full five year period.

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR)

Mr Speaker, the carriage of dangerous goods by road carries the inherent risk of accidents. Taking into account the safety requirements of vehicles in Gibraltar that carry dangerous goods, and in accordance with the Transport (Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) Regulations 2010, Government will continue to provide training to the DVLD's technical



staff in order to qualify them for the issue of an authorization certificate to these vehicles. This year a further course will be held by qualified persons from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in UK in order to train the newly recruited vehicle testers. This course will be held in Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, the introduction of the Motorcycle Compulsory Basic Training Course for riders continues to be a tremendous success. Feedback from the public at large has been extremely positive. Due to the fact that demand surpasses supply, Government is working with the DVLD and looking into possible measures to increase the delivery of the courses.

Photocard Driving Licences:

Mr Speaker, the demand for the issuing of the new photo card driving licences continues to be on the increase, and the waiting times for the issuing of these driving licences continues to be at an all-time low (five to six working days). This combined with the success of an extra business counter being provided at the DVLD offices is ensuring an excellent service for businesses and the public at large.

Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the above, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department continues to use information and communication technology as a tool to achieve better customer services. The general public is now able to access a number of online DVLD services and applications via the new e-Government portal; for example Roadworthiness Test bookings (MOT) and Driving Test and Theory Test bookings. Furthermore, the department is also working on a service to purchase personalised number plates online. These services will allow people to access and pay for such facilities “at any time” and from the comfort of their own homes. This comes as a wealth of new market footprint coverage opportunities for the DVLD that will appropriately cater for market demands and service requirements.

Mr Speaker, further to, and in keeping with our manifesto commitment, I am satisfied that all the relevant outstanding EEC legislation and amendments have now been transposed. Furthermore, in anticipation the department is now working closely with the EUID and studying all future directive proposals in order to expedite their swift implementation as and when the need arises.

Moreover, the Department together with the EUID, is looking to update all existing National Traffic and Transport legislation and determining ways that will make both Acts more user friendly.

Mr Speaker, the Traffic and Transport Commission continue to meet on a monthly basis; The Traffic Commission is constantly working to assist our citizen's in all matters relating to Traffic, while the Transport Commission works hand in hand with all the Transport undertakings and the GTA in order to mutually find strategies to continue to better the Public Services in Gibraltar. To this effect, I am very satisfied that both these bodies have been able to promulgate all Traffic and Transport Regulations successfully. From here, I



would like to thank all the members of both Commissions, many of which are appointed volunteers.

Mr Speaker, E-Reg is the Association of European Vehicle and Driver Registration Authorities. It is a European cooperation made up of all the European Registration Authorities dealing with subjects concerning registration and documentation of vehicles and drivers. The main objective of E-Reg is to bring together all the European Registration Authorities to be able to share knowledge, experience and good practices and also identify, follow and influence European developments and Regulations. I was proud to announce that from 3rd to 5th June 2015 the E-Reg General Meeting & Annual Conference took place here in Gibraltar. Government is positive that having held this conference here, will further strengthen existing liaison procedures between European authorities and Gibraltar making this beneficial not only to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department but to Gibraltar as a whole.

To this end, I can proudly state that to date the DVLD has successfully completed and surpassed all the Commitments as set out in our Manifesto.

Gibraltar Car Parks Limited

Mr Speaker, GCPL continues to manage all covered and non-covered parking within the assigned car parks throughout Gibraltar. They are responsible for keeping the car parks in check for maintenance issues and for their cleaning. GCPL have assisted the Ministry for Housing with the parking schemes within Chilton Court and Albert Risso House. Recently GCPL has also been working within Mid-Harbour's Estate to bring into use the much needed parking barrier system within the estate controlling access to those not from within the estate. This will go a long way in keeping such a large car park more secure.

Mr Speaker, this year, in fact barely months ago construction began on the 1,000 space multi-storey car park within the Mid Town - close to the city centre (on the site of the old Naval Football Grounds). Three hundred parking spaces have been sold to members of the public almost immediately. This building will house 700 public parking spaces together with the Coach Park. The expected completion for this car park is within autumn 2015.

Coaling Island is another area that has been designated as a parking area for private vehicles. This area was full of derelict vehicles and boats. The area was cleared and on the 16th October 2014, this free car park was officially opened to the general public, affording 2 disabled parking bays; 40 motorcycle bays; 88 motor vehicle parking bays; and 11 parking bays for GHA/CMHT employees from the Community Mental Health Team. There is a second phase expected in this area once the works related to the mid harbours new boat marina is complete.



Gibraltar Port Authority

Mr Speaker, I now turn to my responsibility for the Port.

During the course of Financial Year 2014/2015 the Gibraltar Port Authority spent a total of £5,650,323 (including Capital expenditure) from a budget of £5,762,000. Under recurrent revenue, the Gibraltar Port Authority made a total of £4,812,863.

Looking at developments, the new electronic Vessel Management System is now fully operational and is allowing ships' agents to input data remotely in order to provide the most recent information on a vessel's movements, further streamlining port operations. Feedback suggests that local agents in general are very satisfied with this new product; nevertheless, the Gibraltar Port Authority continues to develop the programme to facilitate further the smooth running of the Port.

Mr Speaker, in fulfilment of further manifesto commitments, work continues to improve Port facilities and infrastructure, including the provision of enhanced facilities for operational personnel. As part of this commitment HM Government of Gibraltar continues to invest in the Port. It also pleases me to announce today that work on the new Port administration building, incorporating improved facilities and a better location for the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) office, the GPA's nerve centre, is well under way. The concrete framework is fully complete and the first walls are starting to go up. Mr Speaker, we are also considering the possibility of replacing the VTS equipment itself, de-risking the move and building in improved performance, functionality and resilience for years to come, in the system which underpins safety of navigation in our busy waters. It is envisaged that the project will be completed towards the end of this year, representing a substantial injection of capital investment in the Port in order to fulfil yet another critical manifesto commitment.

Mr Speaker, the process of tendering for a new port launch is also well underway and it is anticipated that a new vessel could be ordered within the next 12 months, to considerably enhance this important capability.

On security Mr Speaker, in addition to the new closed circuit television system that was introduced at the port two years ago, enhancing both safety and security, the Government in conjunction with the GPA and Technical Services will be modifying the restricted area within the Port estate to comply with the Department of Transport (UK) recommendations. Linked to this, a new traffic management plan for taxis and coaches will be implemented shortly to assist with passenger flow.

Mr Speaker, the first stage of the Small Boats Marina, which will accommodate 700 small boats has now been completed with the main perimeter quay having being laid. The second



phase is well under way, along the main quayside, housing the infrastructure for all required services. Plans are also being considered for the use of the long outer berths for super yachts. It is expected that the Marina will be completed by September 2015 and the allocation process for berths is **currently** being considered and will be announced shortly.

The GPA, in close consultation with other Government departments and Port Operators, has recently revised its Oil Spill Contingency plan. As a result, we now have a modern, up to date plan that reflects both the local environment and operations, and investment in equipment, by this Government. The new plan encapsulates the provision of the additional 600 metres of oil spill containment boom purchased last year, already pre-positioned at both harbour entrances and to the west of Ocean Village. Mr Speaker, this delivers a significant improvement in the response time to successfully mitigate any impact of pollution to these areas. The revised plan also includes the Vikoma Alligator Skimmer purchased the previous year. Looking ahead, the tender process for the delivery of a specialised Oil Spill Detection radar to provide full time dedicated coverage of all British Gibraltar Territorial Waters is almost completed - a state of the art, low profile system, adding an invaluable tool to the arsenal at the disposal of the Port Authority to continue protecting our maritime environment. Mr Speaker, further enhancements to the monitoring tools of the Port Authority, such as portable thermal imaging equipment, are also being considered.

Mr Speaker, the Environmental Health and Safety Advisor is doing an excellent job in raising Health and Safety awareness throughout the Port community, ensuring compliance with safety regulations and marine environmental legislation. I am pleased to say that this is resulting in a positive shift in the Port workers' culture and behaviour in this area of critical importance.

More generally, it is pleasing to see that activity levels in the port are showing a positive trend across the board. The Port continues to go from strength to strength. The recent doubling of VTS operators, together with the introduction of a number of initiatives aimed at further improving efficiency, are bearing fruit in commercial terms. Safety, of course, remains our top priority and our professional crew members continue to play a pivotal role, providing a vital search and rescue capability in our busy waters, 24 hours a day, throughout the year, often in challenging and hazardous conditions.

CONCLUSION:

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude my contribution to my budget address thanking all my staff that have worked so hard to see our commitments become a reality. Thanks goes not only to those who ensure the rolling out of our commitments, my senior members of staff, but also to all those who do not go by unnoticed, who perform all the valuable functions within the service throughout all the various departments and offices.

I also wish to reinforce my appreciation to all the staff here within Parliament who work tirelessly to ensure that proceedings run as smoothly and efficiently as they do.



In particular, I would finally also like to thank my personal ministerial staff for all of their help and support during the past year. It has been a very busy year and they have lived up to the expectation as usual. Thank you.

ENDS.